
**PLUMAS COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**
Minutes of the Meeting of December 1, 2010

The Plumas County Planning Commission (the *Commission*) and the City of Portola Planning Commission convene in a Special Joint Meeting on December 1, 2010, at 5:33 p.m. in the Portola Library Meeting Room, 34 Third Avenue, Portola, CA; Chairs, Mark Dotta and Greg Lohn, presiding.

County members appointed are as follows:

1. Mark Dotta, Chair (District 1),
2. Elizabeth "Betsy" Schramel, Vice Chair (District 2),
3. Richard Rydell, Commissioner (District 3),
4. Larry Williams, Commissioner (District 4), and
5. John Olofson, Commissioner (District 5).

City members appointed are as follows:

1. Greg Lohn, Chair,
2. Pam Gill, Vice Chair,
3. Bill Mainland, Commissioner,
4. Tanya Ross-Ward, Commissioner, and
5. Jason Harston, Commissioner.

Staff in Attendance: Randy Wilson, Planning Director
Rebecca Herrin, Senior Planner
Karen Downs, Planner
Coleen Shade, Planning Consultant for County General Plan update
Heidi Wightman, Recording Secretary

Supervisors in Attendance: Terry Swofford

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

III. ROLL CALL

Present: Greg Lohn, Pam Gill, Bill Mainland, Tanya Ross-Ward, Jason Harston, Mark Dotta, Larry Williams, John Olofson, and Betsy Schramel

Absent: Richard Rydell

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

There is no public comment.

V. **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Commissioner Gill states the topic of tonight's meeting is in regard to the letter sent by the City of Portola Planning Commission to Randy Wilson, Planning Director, dated September 27, 2010, which outlines several concerns the Commission has with the Draft Goals and Policies.

Coleen Shade of Design Workshop introduces herself as part of the team working with Plumas County in updating its General Plan. The team is made up of Design Workshop; the environmental firm ESA; LSC Transportation Consultants; Matt Kowta with Bay Area Economics; and Steve Frisch with Sierra Business Council. The contract between Design Workshop and the County was signed in July 2009. To date they have produced a Briefing Report, held six Working Group sessions, gone through a rough draft of General Plan policy language, and held five workshops around the County, which were open to the public to talk about those policies. The team has also begun writing the chapters of the General Plan. The Working Groups are meeting tomorrow with the Planning Commission to work on the maps, boundary lines of community areas, what they are, what they mean, and what terms should be used. Design Workshop plans to have a draft of the General Plan and Elements to the County mid January. Commissioner Dotta notes that work was done on the General Plan update prior to contracting with Design Workshop and that work is also being utilized.

1. **Discussion of Cooperative Planning Options for Areas Outside City Boundaries**

The Opportunity Area map for the area surrounding the City of Portola is displayed. There is discussion regarding the Opportunity Area map and resource production zoning. Randy Wilson, Planning Director, states they are working on terms. Policy 1.1 in the General Plan states intense development should be focused into existing communities and higher densities are discouraged in the rural areas, agricultural areas, etc. The black lines on the map delineate the "core" areas. The blue lines on the map are residential support areas for the core areas. Coleen Shade, consultant, explains that the blue line (the outer circle) is the community area with everything focusing towards the inner circle (the black line). It is important to identify the community area because it guides where you want development to occur. Within the inner circle there are different levels of communities they are trying to define because it's important to give people some predictability. You guide development to the places where the residents of the county support more dense growth. Development outside the boundary would require a General Plan amendment. Wilson adds that they recognize that the City of Portola is one of the communities that exist throughout the county. The effort has not been to look at down-zoning or taking away development rights, but rather to guide the existing land use designations more.

Commissioner Dotta questions if the City has a defined Sphere of Influence. Karen Downs, Planner, replies that there is an approved Sphere of Influence adopted by LAFCo in 2003. Wilson adds that there are some policies in the Land Use Element that require coordination within that sphere. Becky Herrin, Senior Planner, states that there was some discussion that LAFCo was going to comment on the Goals and Policies, and when those comments are received they will be distributed to the City.

2. Review of Portola Planning Commission Comment Letter on Draft Plumas County General Plan Goals and Policies

Item 1

Would Plumas County be amenable to working with Plumas Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) towards the establishment of an “Area of Concern” and/or updating the City’s Sphere of Influence that reflects the City’s needs and growth potential well into the future?

Becky Herrin, Senior Planner, states it is her understanding that LAFCo will be looking at all the Goals and Policies. Karen Downs, Planner, adds that John Benoit, LAFCo Executive Director, coined the term “Area of Concern”, which is a boundary that doesn’t indicate annexation. Randy Wilson, Planning Director, states that term has not been discussed with Benoit. Commissioner Williams questions what type of participation the City is looking for regarding updating the City’s Sphere of Influence. Wilson adds that because they are trying to draw lines around areas on the map, it is certainly valid for the City to propose that area of concern as soon as possible. Wilson proposes sending the City a map of the area so they could present what they think that area of concern would be. Steve Gross, City attorney, states the question is, “Is the Planning Commission and County willing to work with the City?”, because the General Plan should recognize the need for the City to be able to grow in the future. There is currently no identification of areas adjacent to the City that are either core areas, communities, etc. Williams notes this has been demonstrated by the fact that we’re now including the City of Portola within the General Plan language, which didn’t happen before.

Coleen Shade, consultant, explains that in terms of the area of potential expansion for the City, the City’s General Plan should be showing that. The County would be using the City’s General Plan to help guide and plan around the City’s Sphere of Influence. If the City does not have a potential expansion area, the County wants to work with the City to find out what that might be, and LAFCo will absolutely be part of that because they are a stakeholder and an agency with standing. There is already language included that speaks to a joint planning effort in the draft goals and policies. They are proposing in the policy and implementation language to set up the criteria for communities. They are identifying criteria so that can happen all around the county. Because this is a General Plan, we don’t want to make it so specific. The goal is to establish the criteria that identify the areas where there is joint interest. There is a mechanism called a “community plan”.

Gross adds that they are not asking for specific details, but there’s no recognition on the map of the City’s Sphere of Influence. If the Planning Commission is looking at core areas and community areas where there are facilities and likely to be growth and services and a community that supports that, they would expect to see that at the City’s border. The City would hope that there’s some recognition of the City’s Sphere of Influence and looking at that area where it might want to guide developers. Commissioner Schramel questions if the City’s Sphere of Influence identifies the infrastructure and the potential for extending to the areas in that Sphere of Influence. Downs replies that part of the process of LAFCo’s developing the Sphere of Influence is doing a Municipal Service Review, which identifies services.

Wilson states that Goal LU 1.3.1 “Coordinate with the City of Portola in land use planning and development within the City’s Sphere of Influence” was established before the maps were brought out. They didn’t have the Sphere of Influence when the maps were created, but believed there would be input from the City. And now it sounds like the City also wants to create an “Area of Concern”.

Shade adds that the interest is in making sure that there is recognition of the Sphere of Influence and planning directly adjacent to that sphere. Shade doesn't feel there is a need to create another "layer" on the maps because they have the ability to create an "area of concern" through the Goals and Policies. Commissioner Dotta states he doesn't feel the County should get involved with helping the City determine what they feel is an area of concern. Wilson adds that the City needs to provide something that identifies their area of concern and also a further examination of the policies designed to coordinate with the City. Gross clarifies that the County is willing to work with the City, but in order to take the next step the County needs more specifics. Commissioner Lohn states the City and County will work together on the area of concern.

Item 2

The Planning Commission would like to receive a copy of any comments that Plumas LAFCo makes regarding the General Plan Goals and Policies.

Becky Herrin, Senior Planner, states that as soon as the County receives comments from LAFCo, they will be forwarded to the City.

Item 3

It is listed as a goal that Plumas County will promote in-fill development to discourage agricultural and timberland conversion demands and encourage higher densities in Prime Opportunity Areas and identified community expansion areas (Goals LU-1.1). The Planning Commission is concerned about encouraging development outside of the City's borders in an area that impacts the City, even if it is out of the City's Sphere of Influence, in accordance with the generally-accepted planning concepts of preventing urban sprawl.

Coleen Shade, consultant, questions if creating a joint planning area would address this issue so that when issues came up there would be a venue to discuss them. Karen Downs, Planner, states that the concern is creating another city outside of Portola that would impact the City. Commissioner Dotta questions if the City has specific language that would meet their concerns. Downs replies that the language would be similar to what was talked about with the joint planning area. The joint planning area would alleviate concerns about encouraging development outside the City and creating two cities right next to each other. Commissioner Williams questions what negative impacts the City is concerned with. Commissioner Gill replies that they are concerned with preventing urban sprawl. Steve Gross, City attorney, adds they are concerned with high-density development outside of the City using the City's facilities and infrastructure and not contributing towards it such as roads, the post office, traffic, noise, air quality; impacts the City is left to deal with. Commissioner Gill feels a joint planning area would address these concerns. Gross adds that the City would like to be a more active participant in the drafting of the policy language.

Item 4

Goal LU-1.3 to “coordinate with the City of Portola in land use planning and development within their sphere of influence. (To) Encourage compatibility and coordination of land use designations” could be further enhanced to include policies for areas that impact the City of Portola, particularly related to fire, safety, traffic, and the environment, in addition to coordination for projects within the City’s Sphere of Influence.

Coleen Shade, consultant, states Goal LU-1.3 is only about the City of Portola. Policy LU-1.3.1, which states “The County shall continue to work closely with the City of Portola concerning planning and development of land within the City’s Sphere of Influence” needs some language added that talks about areas identified as joint planning areas, or something, so it’s not just about the Sphere of Influence. There needs to be policies that direct the County to look at fire, safety, traffic, and other issues that could impact the City. This issue can also be addressed with the creation of a joint planning area.

Item 5

Policy LU-1.1.1 says that “isolated housing tracts in outlying areas shall be discouraged as they disrupt surrounding rural and productive agricultural lands, forests, and ranches and are difficult and costly to provide with services.” How would the County encourage new residential development projects to be located within or adjacent to Prime Opportunity Areas? How would impact to the City and City services and infrastructure needed for this growth be mitigated? Would this policy be similar for commercial projects? Would expansion of housing and/or commercial development be similar?

Coleen Shade, consultant, replies that the County is directing developers and property owners to the areas where their projects will be supported verses areas that are currently not adjacent to any service areas. Additionally, any General Plan amendments that allow for large subdivisions that were not considered under the General Plan will be looked at very closely by the Attorney General. Commissioner Lohn questions mitigations for projects or developments that would impact the City. It is decided that a joint planning area would address this issue.

Item 6

The possibility of a “community plan” for planning in the Sphere of Influence area as identified in Policy LU-1.3.2 is commendable. The Planning Commission would also like to include additional areas that impact the City of Portola. Also, the community plan would detail future provision of services in these areas.

Karen Downs, Planner, states that a joint planning area would address this issue.

Item 7

In accordance with Policy LU-1.3.6, the Planning Commission would like to work with County staff towards pursuing of a formal agreement with Plumas County.

Randy Wilson, Planning Director, states that language came from John Benoit, LAFCo Executive Officer, and questions if the City will provide a map of the “areas of concern”. Commissioner Gill states the City needs to revisit the policy language so it’s broader than the Sphere of Influence.

Commissioner Gill thanks everyone for participating in the meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned at 7:10 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting is December 2, 2010, at 10:00 a.m., in the Plumas County Library Meeting Room.



Mark Dotta, Chair
Plumas County Planning Commission



Heidi Wightman, Recording Secretary